

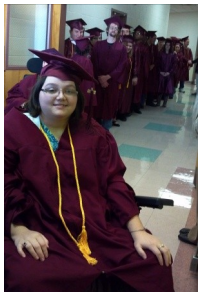


Operation Christmas Child-A Ten Year Tradition

We all enjoy receiving gifts at Christmas but nothing compares to giving gifts of joy to people in need. Since 2002, Gale Demick, supervisor of the Visual Impairment Services (VIS) program and her students have coordinated an Operation Christmas Child project at TRC and encouraged others to participate. This year, VIS students worked like elves filling gift boxes full of toys, school supplies, and hygiene products to donate to children during the holidays. Once the boxes were filled, they were taken to a collection site where they were distributed by Samaritan's Purse, a forty-two year old nonprofit Christian organization that provides food, medicine, and other assistance to poverty stricken and devastated areas worldwide. In the past ten years, 260 boxes from TRC have gone to children in America (Hurricane Katrina), the Ukraine, the Republic of Congo, and Zimbabwe, among other places. Staff and students were happy to continue this tradition and pleased that they could help others have a Merry Christmas again.



Graduates Make Graduation Special



There was both hesitation and anticipation when it was announced that a former student would be the key note guest speaker at the December ceremony. But all doubts quickly vanished as speaker, Brett Martin talked about his journey since his accident and joked about some of his life experiences.

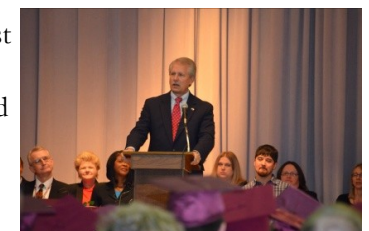
Brett (pictured right center) enrolled in the TRC Traumatic Brain Injury Program in 2005 following an accident when he fell from the bed of a truck. He successfully completed his program and graduated in 2006. After graduating, Brett worked as an intern in the office of Senator Bill Ketron

and went on to work as a warehouse manager at Kimbro Oil. Senator Ketron gladly introduced Brett and complimented him on his good work and commitment when he worked in his office in the 13th District. Senator Ketron also offered great support for the graduates and applauded their accomplishments. Brett was energetic and entertaining during his address.



Kevin Bishop (pictured left) was the graduating student speaker. Kevin spoke to the graduating class about how he slowly lost most of his vision starting at a young age. Although there were problems with his laptop as he began his speech, he remained calm and didn't give up. His perseverance was encouraging and his speech was uplifting. See page 2 for more on his story.

Several people commented at the conclusion of the ceremony that this was the best graduation they'd ever attended. Thank you Brett and Kevin for making the graduation so special!



Let's Give Them Something to Talk About



Kevin Bishop, from Murfreesboro, began the Visual Impairment Services (VIS) program in June, 2012 and graduated from the program on December 14, 2012. Kevin's vision loss began around the age of four due to a progressive eye disease.

Despite his low vision, Mr. Bishop worked as a meat cutter for many years until he could no longer safely do his job due to increased vision loss. He then tried to work as a telemarketer for a brief time but unfortunately was unable to see the computer screen clearly. A visit to a Nashville eye doctor revealed that in addition to Mr. Bishop's eye disease, he had developed glaucoma and cataracts.

Fortunately, Mr. Bishop said he learned about the VIS program after a friend put him in touch with someone who told him about TRC. Soon after, Mr. Bishop was referred to VIS by his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Ellen Averso, to learn the adaptive skills he would need to help him compensate for and cope with his progressive vision loss.

At first, Mr. Bishop was unsure of a vocational goal and seemed to lack confidence in himself and in his abilities. However, as he learned new skills and interacted with others, he gained confidence. Eventually, Mr. Bishop decided he wanted to work in the areas of retail and customer service.

After learning how to navigate through and complete online applications from his VIS Transitional Skills instructor, Mr. Bishop completed several applications. Soon after, the calls for job interviews began. He was hired in late September as a sales associate at Kohl's department store in Murfreesboro. He said he was told by store management that he was the only person hired out of the group of eight job seekers. He also said he was the only person in that group with an obvious physical disability.

Mr. Bishop said, "the confidence I had going into the interview as a person with a disability was boosted by my training, which has been amazing." After starting his new job, Mr. Bishop shared details of his job search, interview, and hiring process with other students who were blind or visually impaired, many of whom have never been gainfully employed. Mr. Bishop's family and his instructors are very proud of his accomplishments.

"I feel like I have more skills now and I can be more confident," said Mr. Bishop. "I possess the ability to be independent now, and that is better than what I had. In the past, I was afraid to go out after dark. I could never do this before."

Warehouse Students on the "Move"

January has been a very busy month for warehouse students. When they weren't loading boxes, they were moving furniture. If they weren't setting up program equipment, they were relocating classroom areas. All of these activities were a part of the process to return displaced staff and students to their training areas after the "B" building renovation was completed in December.

Students Andrew Counts, Shane Riggs, Adam Sealar, and Gary Thompson (pictured top right) assisted in transporting approximately 100 boxes of phones from one location to another. Andrew Counts, Titus Crawford, Richard Dilbeck, and Shane Riggs assisted maintenance staff in moving the key room to the new tool room location. (pictured lower right) Titus Crawford, Carlos Witt, and Andrew Curtis (middle picture) assisted custodial staff by removing old dorm furniture and moving in new furniture from storage. These "live work" experiences provided great opportunities for the students to apply the skills they've learned in the Warehouse program and everyone agrees that the "moves were smooth." Good job guys!



Mystery Luau Builds Skills & Reveals Talents

The TBI students, assisted by TRC staff, worked on a complex and lengthy project during the entire month of October. The challenge, was a Lunch Mystery Luau that included: decorating, meal planning and preparation, scheduling, costumes, and scariest of all—acting! Students worked with Occupational Therapy to prepare a Hawaiian themed meal for 15 students including authentic dishes like Lomi Lomi, (salmon salad). The students also visited Omni Hut, a local Polynesian restaurant, to get inspiration for the decorations and received some great information about owning and working for a locally owned small business from the owner.

Speech therapy worked with the students on following instructions, problem solving, and using creativity to make handmade decorations for the tables and room. Physical Therapy staff assisted with the larger craft projects while also focusing on balance and coordination. Students in the Building Maintenance program even helped with the planning by cutting out a wood volcano and pineapple to be used as props. (Pictured lower right)

The acting portion of the play required 8 characters to read through over 25 pages of script in three acts and then improvise conversations in character between acts. Kelsey Herzog and Stacy Mack stated that this helped them work on their reading, memory, and communication skills. Stanley Curry said the experience was great practice for public speaking and stated, “in the workplace, you often need to be able to speak to a group even if it is only a small group of co-workers.”

The students were truly proud of their accomplishment. Several mentioned how complicated and difficult the project seemed in the beginning. Students also talked about how the experience helped them work with each other. Jamie Cozart said the project improved his social skills and working together helped everyone learn more about each person’s strengths and talents.

Behavior instructor Lori Williamson believes the Luau project provided a wonderful opportunity to work on peer and staff relations that will transfer to the work environment. “At the beginning of the project, a few students took over tasks and many others did not want to share opinions,” said Lori. But by the end, the group came together and began asking each other for help.

On October 31, the students’ hard work was enjoyed by both TBI students and staff. The Luau was a huge success!

Luau cast pictured top right: (Back row) Sean Ensinger, Cynthia Gurley, David Carodine, Jamie Cozart, Stanley Curry (Front row) Stacy Mack, James Reese, Kelsey Herzog

Action shot during the Luau pictured left: Cynthia Gurley, David Carodine, and Jamie Cozart examining the “Most Wanted Poster,” one of the pieces of evidence.



Campus Improvements

Tennessee Rehabilitation Center has undergone many upgrades and improvements over the past five years and we are happy to announce that renovations are now complete. The dorms are completely remodeled with new windows, lockers, restrooms and showers. New exterior lighting, security cameras, and signage with ADA compliant Braille placards have also been installed campus wide. The restrooms have been remodeled and doors have been widened in the A and B buildings to accommodate oversize wheelchairs. And most recently the B-building has also received a “facelift” with new paint, carpet, and repurposed furniture in most of the training classrooms. This is an exciting time at TRC as students and teachers return to their newly upgraded areas. Please call to schedule a tour and see all of the improvements at TRC. We’d love to show you around.

Vision Impairment Services Introduces Affordable Assistive Technology



Technology designed to assist people with disabilities in their daily lives can be very expensive. For people with vision impairments, software programs that allow PC navigation can cost thousands. Other devices that magnify images are often unaffordable. Fortunately, as technology has progressed, affordable options have increased. One in particular, the iPad, stands out for its affordability and built-in accessibility features. This year, Alaina Johnson, 21, of Murfreesboro, became the first TRC student to receive an iPad as an assistive device and with the help of VIS staff, Alaina is learning the many ways this device can be useful to her. Through the Settings application, Alaina can turn on accessibility features and enable the hand-held video magnifier. She can then use this feature to shave her legs, apply makeup, or read labels and prices. If she chooses, she can also install several additional third-party apps which include: a book reader, money identifier, color identifier, cookbook, and personal shopping device. Marketplace hardware that provides similar technology

and functions would cost over \$10,000—a total that is not affordable to most students. Alaina was excited to learn that she had access to so many options in one device and that additional technology is available to meet a variety of her personal needs.

Alaina said the Internet navigation was easy for her to learn with just a few hand gestures. She uses the device to assist with practical daily activities like looking up recipes, listening to an audio book or looking up apartment information. With this device, Alaina will have access to a world that she may not have otherwise been able to explore. Vision Impairment Services staff have enjoyed working with Alaina and are eager to continue to introduce clients to the assistive technology they need at an affordable price.

Former student, Raymond “Ray” Terranova finished his first semester as a full time student at ETSU in December 2012. Ray completed 13 hours of coursework, with a “B” average, as part of his major in Digital Visualization. He is registered for 13 hours for the Spring semester. His mother said, “Your program in Smyrna definitely prepared him for college.” See Raymond's story in the September 2012 issue on the TRC Website.



TRC Welcomes New Staff

Tracy Verdun – Rehab Assistant
Kayla Bartlett – Rehab Assistant
Tammy Brown – Rehab Assistant

TRC has established a “Students First” philosophy. Our core values revolve around meeting our student’s needs and are clearly identified as follows:

Students First

*Because the student—has a need
We have a job to do*

*Because the student—has a choice
We must be a better choice*

*Because the student—has sensibilities
We must be considerate*

*Because the student—has an urgency
We must be efficient*

*Because the student—is unique
We must be flexible*

*Because the student—has high expectations
We must excel*

*Because the student—has influence
We have the hope of more customers*

Because the student—We Exist!

**A program of the
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Division of Rehabilitation Services
Vocational Rehabilitation**

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